

Title: **The Changing Nature of Small-Scale Fisheries Policy in Vietnam**

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Abstract: Many millions of people throughout Vietnam depend in full or part on the country's aquatic resources for food, livelihood and employment. The fisheries and aquaculture sectors are significant contributors to the economy of Vietnam. With increasing population pressure and the development of more effective (and/or destructive) fishing gears and practices, nearshore fishery resources have been increasingly overexploited (MOFI/World Bank 2004). Many high value fish resources have declined to a low level. Catches of lower value species have increased and these are also being depleted. Excess fishing capacity has been determined to be a leading cause of overfishing in the country. The exhaustion of fisheries resources and degradation of the environment are leading to livelihood difficulties and poverty of coastal dwellers, particularly of small-scale fishers. Poverty contributes to overfishing and resource depletion since fishers must generate income in the short term, and cannot afford to take a longer-term view towards sustainable fisheries. This paper will present a review of changes in policy towards small-scale fisheries in Vietnam over the last three decades. There will be a discussion of the changing nature of the fisheries (demographics, fish stocks, technology) and government responses. The paper will spend time discussing recent policies towards small-scale fisheries, especially the Master Plan for Fisheries Development to 2010 and Orientations to 2020. The paper will conclude with recommendations for small-scale fisheries policy improvements.